

Old World Handicrafts Flourishing Here on Record Scale



SIGNOR TALIERCIO and ONE of HIS COME-OUT CUTTERS. TALIERCIO SET UP THE FIRST COME-OUT CUTTING SHOP IN AMERICA.



BOHEMIAN and CZECHO-SLOVAK EMBROIDERERS of the LENOX HILL SETTLEMENT COLONY



NEW YORK'S OLDEST WOOD CARVER and HIS APPRENTICE.

America Awakens to Keener Appreciation of Beautiful Hand Wrought Things and Find They Can Be Obtained in Abundance at Home

It has long been an accepted cliché to America that it is a country of mass production, of wholesale production, of course and "mass processes." For a time this cliché was justified, but it is passing. People who have money to spend for beautiful things, hand wrought, are finding out that it is not necessary for them to go to Europe to search for them. And as soon as they realized that to have lovely ornaments with individual styles for their homes, they must themselves take time to think, to study, to choose and discard with careful taste, then appeared the artisans who could supply these artistic cravings.

These artisans at first and for the most part still come from abroad. Lacemakers and embroiderers, tapestry workers, brass beaters, glass blowers, cameo and diamond cutters, who emigrating to this country found that there was no demand for their goods and drifted into foreign labor, are now returning to their original vocations because the demand has come at last. Out of the vast foreign population of New York the craftsman who inherited his little trade from a long series of ancestors who carried it on in Europe is making himself felt in a small but growing way, and truly many Old World arts are now successfully carried on here.

Often these arts belong to a particular nation. For instance, a brass beater is distinctly Russian, the cameo cutter, Italian. Entire families belong to two arts. If Bohemian the men to glass blowing, the women to fine embroidery, and many times when a member of a family breaks away from the traditional occupation of a family he is not looked upon with favor.

The first of these crafts to be taken up in America was that of Russian brass beating. At first it was followed in a desultory manner, utensils being made for the use of those of the Russian colony. This was a number of years ago. Gradually some of the better found way to open markets for these arts. Russians set up large factories. For several years they made trips back and forth from Russia, bringing with them rare old pieces that were then copied by the Russian brass beaters. When the war broke out and the metal for such work could not be obtained these factories, employing between them some two hundred workers, were forced to shut down, and the industry was temporarily dead. But had not some of the old men who maintain small shops and who had a stock of material on hand to keep them going at first kept the thing going, there are ever 5,000 brass beaters in New York city alone, and that these could keep the American market supplied and also have goods for export.

The Old Russian Workman. It is one thing to see men working in a large brass beating shop, where the din of the hammers assault the ear in a most terrifying manner, and quite another to stroll through the quarter where the old Russian bands twinkle over his anvil and coaxes a piece of stubborn metal into a beautiful shape. In this shop there is no roaring noise, but a gentle tinkling of the hammer on metal.

Then street on the East side, might be known as the Street of the Brass Beaters. There one finds small shops, and behind them is a room in

which the proprietor works to add articles of his handicraft to his stock. Then there are the cellars, where an old Russian or two has set up his forge and is working to order for shops and private customers.

Here was found a cellar typical of a brass beating shop of Russia. Two old men were at work. Tap went the hammer and up flared the tiny forge. Every day the two old men work here, and one of them said that he is 80 and his partner 89. Neither looked so old, for their eyes are bright and young with the strange light of youth that always seems lurking in the Russian eyes. All their lives they have been brass beating. One found out that it is not of necessity that they come every day to the cellar, for one owns several tenements in the Bronx and the other has a good round bank account. It is for the love of this work. They cannot leave it.

In another cellar, scarcely less interesting, works an old man and a young boy. The old man stopped in his work to answer some questions. "Brass beating will never die here," he said; "not as long as there are Russians. Americans are using beaten brass and copper more every day. Your big hotels use it in their kitchens, and it is also used in homes and for ornaments."

"I came here young. I was educated here. My father had a brass beating shop and taught me how. My grandfather too was a brass beater. I taught my son. He has a big shop up town, and now I teach my grandson. I am a good American, but I will not stop brass beating until the boy here knows how. It cannot go out of the family as long as there are boys."

So here in "Little Russia" the tradition of the family trade is carrying on. **The Cameo Cutters.** If Russian brass beating was the first of the Old World handicrafts to flourish here, cameo cutting is the second. The cameo that you prize so highly and that belonged to your grandmother or your great-grandmother was undoubtedly carved on the southern shores of Italy. The cameo you buy to-day may well have been carved here by expert workmen from that land of sun and blue skies. Cameos are still being imported, but many large and fine ones are cut here.

Shortly before the beginning of the war cameos began to appear in American markets again. In fact there was a great demand for them. When it became impossible to import them the jewellers saw a serious time ahead. They had on hand many of the very large and expensive cameos, but they were far short of the medium sized kind that the average man could afford. It seems that the first of the Signor Taliercio of Italy visited America. In Italy he has a cameo cutting atelier in Torre del Greco. In making the rounds of the jewellers he discovered the shortage in cameos. Among the Italians here he found many expert workers in shell and coral and proceeded to open a cutting shop. There are now three of these in New York city.

"We are proving that cameo cutting can be done here successfully," he says. "There is no doubt about it that conditions are more favorable for the work, as it now stands, over in Italy. There our places for cutting are down by the sea. We build low, low ateliers and the workers draw their inspiration from nature. It would be ideal to have such places as this down on Long Island or other shores."

"Nearly all of the cutters in Italy

POLISH GLASS BLOWER MAKING DECORATIONS for CHRISTMAS TREES.

are women, and before long I hope to have some of them here. Many think that the shell and the coral from which the cameo is cut comes from Italy. This is an error. They come from Japan, Zanzibar, the West Indies and Bermuda, so you see we are not much farther away from the bases of supply. "Cameo cutting is a thing that must be learned from childhood. It must be lived near and worked in when young. There have only been a few instances where grown persons have successfully learned the art. The head or scene is cut directly on the shell or coral. There is no pattern by which to go any more than an artist or sculptor has a pattern. "We are able to pay our workers enough to make the business a success. There is a great future for cameo art in portraiture. Americans are open to suggestion and love the beautiful, and the cameos may be used in frames like miniatures. The first portrait we have cut is that of President Wilson. It was a large, oval cameo three inches in measurement and took three weeks to make."

Another art that has come to America is Italian wood carving. For a number of years there has been in New York one Italian wood carver who has stuck to his last through thick and thin. But to-day there are four shops executing this work and each shop has at least two young boys receiving instruction.

Before the war if one wanted truly

beautiful wood carving it was necessary to go abroad and purchase it or deal through an importer here. Antique and modern carving was brought

over; but the war stopped this and the demand by discriminating persons continued. It was then that the one lover of his work in New York was

overwhelmed with orders, and there entered others in the field. With this, as in the other arts, men who knew wood carving had been otherwise occupied and could now turn again to the thing they knew best.

"It is good to carve the wood again," said one man looking up from his bench. "I no have to die da ditch now. I carve da wood. She smell sweet. Smell da shave," and he lifted a handful of small chips and shavings that certainly did smell sweet.

The wood carver who cannot design a carved only a mediocre fellow by his work. One sees classical drawings for all sorts of things hanging on the wall. In one shop there is now being completed an exquisite set of panels for an American home. The wood is old and mellow.

Other Imported Workers. It seems that Italians have much to give. The limit is by no means reached with the cameo cutting and wood carving, for the women are also embroiderers and lace makers. Every girl in Italy in the convents and among the peasantry learns to lace, to sew, to embroider. This means that the majority of the Italian women in America can produce such work here, and it is now being done in a small way. Italy's linen market has suffered greatly, due to the war. Having little or no cotton, the linen has been used for clothes and dressings. Aside from this, the finest linen used for art work

is woven in Belgium, and Belgium is not now in a position to supply this. Many women have come up from the rural districts there, entered munitions and other factories, and do not intend to go back to the fields or their embroidery, and so the condition of this market is very different from five or six years ago. One large firm in New York has said that when the present supply they have on hand runs out they may have to close up shop. However, with the Italian needlework artists beginning to produce in this country such a catastrophe may be averted. Many Poles and Hungarians in this country are experts in very fine glass blowing. Some have been employed in such factories in Germany before coming here. A couple of young men in New York saw what the demand for this work meant, investigated the matter, got hold of glass blowers of this special sort and set up shop to supply Christmas tree ornaments.

How the Work is Done. There is more to blowing these fragile ornaments than one thinks. The glass comes in tubes from six to eight feet in length and about an inch in diameter. The blowers sit at a bench placed some five feet apart. In front of each man is a gas blow lamp. The rods of glass are broken and lengthened by the workers until it over the flame. When the right temperature is obtained they pull the glass apart in the middle, place the open end in the mouth and proceed to blow, manipulating the glass tube so that a ball is formed on which they rest them on the tree.

Some months ago the workers of the Lenox Hill Settlement House were faced with a serious problem among their neighborhood women. Rent and living expenses having gone up many found it absolutely necessary to work at home with their children and keep house, for the majority of their men folks worked in the cigar factories and made good money.

A meeting was called and Miss Manning, head worker of the Settlement, asked: "What can you do best?" "Make lace. Make needlework," came the reply. One woman then explained that this was the work they all knew best. They were asked to bring samples to the Settlement. They did, and the result is that now forty of these women, who were on the verge of having to go into factories, are producing beautiful embroideries for private customers and exclusive shops.

Miss Carroll, who is in charge, said: "In their home countries this is the thing that girls are brought up to do. When through with a day on the farm, or when the weather does not permit field labor and in winter, they turn to embroidery. Agents go through the country, collect the work, paying the girls as small an amount as they possibly can, and sell it to importers. It is then brought here and a high price paid."

"It is all a very pretty picture to think of the peasant girl in her native country sitting under a tree or in some quaint interior and plying her needle. But pretty as the picture is, the ugly

part of it is found in the way the agents grind them down in price. Here the women receive at least three-fourths of the money for which the article is sold, and the prices are high, for it is beautiful work and worth every cent of it. No heavy machinery do not follow pattern, their design is not 'stamped.' The Italian girl will first draw her pattern and then work it. Not so the Bohemian. She creates as she goes along. "Where do you get your design?" one woman was asked. "Design? You mean this?" pointing to the work. "I don't know. From the grass, the tree, the little flower. I get it everywhere, from my heart, from my head. It is all around me and I take it and put it in here."

One woman came into the settlement and brought a piece of heavy dark linen. On it was embroidered a border about a foot wide of horizon blue and deep red. She held it out, to Miss Carroll.

"I make curtains," she said. "Door curtains? You like?" "Miss Carroll being a young woman of excellent taste said she did 'like.' So here's this woman making a wonderful set of portieres. A peasant woman in Bohemia would probably never make these, but here they have seen curtains and portieres in the settlement house and other places and it has occurred to one embroiderer to make such a set.

Opportunity for Lace Makers. There is another line of old world art that would flourish here if there were a large enough number of persons to carry it through. That is the making of Belgian, Brussels and other kinds of lace. There are few Belgians in this country who understand this art. One woman was seen who is kept busy supplying private customers. This was interesting to watch her. This lace is made on what is known as a "lace pillow," a hard stuffed affair. A pattern is then pinned on and pins placed on the dotted lines of the pattern, then the deft hands of the worker handle the numerous shuttles that hold the fine thread. It looks like an impossible tangle to one unfamiliar with it, but to the lace maker it is all as clear as day. It is impossible to produce more than a yard of two inch lace a day, in fact one must be a lightning worker to do this. Of course if this sold for \$2 or \$4 a yard a day's work would be well paid, but it does not always bring so much. Lace making may be one of those old world arts that will not stand transplanting. If the lace making in itself is too slow a process here, the mending and repairing is not, and many of the shops that handle the fine hand made laces from foreign countries there are Italian, French and Belgian girls employed in mending and restoring old pieces.

All of these things that are new industries in America have been turned up by the war. Each of the foreign colonies seem to have an art to contribute. No longer will America be looked upon as wholly machine made, for now, as never before, she is developing and appreciating the fine handwork of men and women who have been here all the time, but who have been hidden away in some corner of the city.

The Drug Menace and What It Means to New York

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dope as such and they do not believe that they cannot get along without the prescription that they find cures their particular disease—insomnia, neuritis, neuritis, or what not.

They are the hypochondriac type who consume quantities of medicine for ailments that would disappear under the spell of a little will power added to a quittance of this same medicine. Minus the will power they essay to stop dosing themselves with their beloved prescription. The first twinge of pain or sleepless night hushes them to the medicine chest and the good old dose slips another tentacle around the neck of its spineless victim.

Tell one of these hypochondriacs that he is a drug addict and you make a life long enemy. He doesn't know it but he is just as much a dope fiend as "Dago Frank" was. His physician did not tell him. Either he was too good a source of income for the doctor to take such chances with or the doctor held off so informing him out of consideration for the family and so on.

Just such unsuspecting drug addicts, Dr. Copeland caused to be published the legal definition of an addict, thus: "Any person who has needed or demanded the administering, prescribing for, or dispensing of cocaine, opium or their derivatives at more or less regular intervals for thirty consecutive days prior to the time such person applies to a physician or a physician of any institution for the administering, prescribing for or dispensing of any such drugs or their derivatives; provided, however, that upon the filing of the report of the case by the attending physician, or the physician of an institution in charge of the patient, with this department, it may rule that such person shall or shall not be recorded."

Another type that will not register in the men or the woman who has been addicted for years and has been

successful in concealing his or her disease from his or her family. This type would quite gladly choose sudden death as an alternative rather than share his or her secret. The majority of such addicts are members of most respectable families. The shame attaching itself to their addiction is always in their minds. The disgrace they assume will attach itself to their families in the event of publicity is not to be thought of. This class will be the hardest to reach as a matter of fact almost impossible to uncover. Also this class is the least menacing of all.

The System of Treating. Dr. Copeland's system of treatment of the drug addict incurs a tapering off of daily dosages until the patient is in shape for scientific institutional care. His method is set forth by Dr. Ernest F. Bishop, clinical professor, professor of medicine, New York Polyclinic Medical School. Dr. Bishop says:

"In the minds of too many of the administrative and judicial and legislative authorities, and even of our own profession, the taking of narcotic drugs is still the main issue to be stopped irrespective of all other considerations, at once by whatever means, violent or otherwise. Do we stop to think, or have we any conception or suspicion of what it would mean if all narcotic addicts were deprived of their supply or compelled to immediately enter upon protracted treatment at once or within a short time. The result would be disastrous and spectacular. Many, probably a majority of narcotic addicts are upstanding responsible citizens. They have tried every available method of cure and relief presented to them. You don't have to force these men to take treatment. Many of them have already taken all the treatments that have come to their attention. It is about time that we realized the facts of this matter. "It is very evident that under existing conditions, immediate and enforced

incarceration for final treatment is impractical and impossible, and that the present problem for all except those frankly and primarily criminal or mentally incompetent, who happen to have become addicts, is the rational handling and care of existing conditions at the hands of reputable general practitioners of medicine. The number of narcotic addicts is too vast, and the possible accommodations and facilities and machinery for intelligent handling far too insignificant to render other approach intelligent or practical."

At the solicitation of the Department of Health, Cornelius P. Collins, Justice of the Court of Special Sessions, wrote recently a monograph upon the drug evil as he saw it from the bench and therein he says: "A study of the statistics in New York county alone indicated that while the evil in so far as the use of morphine, cocaine and opium was a serious one, the whole three of them put together were not nearly as serious as the growth of the heroin habit. The heroin habit has grown to extremely large proportions in a way that was absolutely appalling, distressful not only to the well being of those addicted, but to the well being of the State, because, if permitted to continue in the degree in which it has taken root, it would threaten very dire results and conditions which would call for general public activity."

"A study of the facts indicated that the heroin habit strikes particularly the youth. While a great deal has been said of addiction on the part of children, it is quite negligible. In the Children's Court a drug addict is quite rare. At the age of sixteen even there were no drug addicts for three months in Special Sessions. Yet, as if nature drew a line, from sixteen years of age on, they were quite numerous. Between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two there were such a large number of heroin victims that the average age of victims may be fixed at twenty-two years, and that average age is made up in the period of five

or six years—that is, the years between seventeen and twenty-two—thus showing that it strikes the youth particularly. "We know, all of us, the horrible examples of these conditions. We see young men almost destroyed, absolute shadows of their former selves, with will, memory and understanding impaired, 'the pale youth' Markham describes combating in frenzied fancy their 'Phantoms that fling wild laughter and wild tears into the crater of the wasted brain, with a pronounced attitude to embrace the wrong even though contrary to the nature of the individual. At least one-tenth of the whole of the business of the Court of Special Sessions of New York county is made up of drug addicts, those possessing the drug or having dealt in it in some way. This means 10 per cent of all the cases coming into our court, a large part of which do not involve moral turpitude. "In addition to the number of these addicts, as such, come quite a large number of large larceny, assault, unlawful entry and the like, who are nevertheless addicts, so that it is safe to say that in 20 to 30 per cent of the cases coming into the Court of Special Sessions involving moral turpitude, the culprits are given to drug addiction in some form or other. "This is such a horrible situation that it brought home to all of us the absolute necessity for the doing of something which meant business in the attempt to control this evil. We men throughout the State who daily see the procession of these pale youths, victims of the drug habit, may be said to be men who are not unduly worked over anything. We are somewhat like an undertaker, inured to the corpse. The ordinary proceedings in a criminal court, while calling for some emotion, do not excite us; yet, nevertheless, this drug evil situation shocks us, trained and experienced as we are in the performance of our duty.

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